

Saturday, 7 January 2017

Autobiography of Clifton Francis Arnesen, Jr.

**Bisexual Community Activist ; and Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual,
Transgender and Heterosexual Military Veterans Advocate.**

**President Emeritus, New England GLBT Veterans, Inc. Boston,
MA, which was dissolved on Nov. 1, 2013 after 27 years of
advocacy on behalf of America's GLBT&H military veterans.)**

**All information that follows in my Autobiography, shall become,
and remain, a permanent record of my "Deed of Donation" to:**

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I am thankful to all the aforementioned organizations and archivists, for their magnanimous outreach to me as a Bisexual human being.

PREFACE:

At age 68, I write with a sense of urgency, as my health is poor due to battling throat cancer in 2009, and Hepatitis C for decades. Both diseases were successfully treated by the Veterans Administration. Cancer by 33 sessions of laser radiation which compromised my immune system; and Hepatitis C in 2015, by a new “miracle” drug approved by the FDA –whose side-effects are yet to be determined.

Also, I now live every day with the terrible pain of Sciatica in my left leg, which disabled me in 2006 ; osteoarthritis throughout my body, Military Sexual Trauma/Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); generalized anxiety and other medical conditions.

Thus, I feel a profound sense of my own mortality, as tomorrow is promised to no one, and everything has an expiration date! Indeed, one’s health is their true wealth! Not money or material possessions!

This stated, even in the face of constant pain, and the mental and emotional negative “constants” in life, of man’s inhumanity to man, bigotry, prejudice, discrimination; and wars that beget other wars of eternal pain and suffering, I find solace and peace in special places to escape.

I find refuge from man’s inhumanity in the beauty of our Earth and its creatures; in a myriad of music that takes me to emotional and spiritual places; in the awesome magnificence of the bright stars and planets in an endless universe; in simple acts of kindness; and in the friends and human and civil rights advocates whom I have met along the way in my life’s journey.

Always remember to tell your friends and loved ones that you love them! Never put it off for tomorrow, as all we ever have is today and the moment.

Fate has blessed me in my advocacy to try and make this world a better place in which to live in, than when I was born into it.

A world where I am in knowledge of the “constants” in life of “learned” prejudice and discrimination, which resides in the hearts of many people who view another human being, or group of people, as inferior and undeserving of the human and civil rights they wish for themselves.

My 27 years of advocacy has been a labor of love on behalf of GLBT& Heterosexual military veterans, and the Bisexual Community, fueled by the sublimation of my anger at the Military for being discharged as a Homosexual from the U.S. Army; and the “love” in my heart I have known from both men and women.

But, my advocacy has exacted a heavy price upon my mind and health. A price which I believe all human and civil rights advocates pay to one degree or another, as we also struggle with the conflicts of personal religious beliefs; and the eternal dark forces within society, which seek to rob us of full “equality” within society.

The second paragraph in the Declaration of Independence states: “We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.”

But, in reality, the struggle for true equality requires “eternal vigilance,” as the evil to deny GLBTQ people full equality is an eternal and constant evil, which is fought with enemies in existence; and those yet to be born.

Enemies inclusive of fanatics of the Religious Right; perverted organized religions and cults; fundamentalists, conservatives, and many others who hate GLBTQ people and use the Holy Bible as a tool to try and justify their sick and twisted hatred of us.

In short, anti-GLBT bigotry hides behind the cloak of religion. Indeed, Karl Marx was correct when he stated, “Religion is the opium of the people.” Often rendered as “Religion is the opiate of the masses.”

As a Roman Catholic and former Altar Boy who struggled with my own religion as an advocate for the human and civil rights of GLBT military veterans; the Bisexual + Community; and the larger Gay Community, I came to the personal conclusion that all GLBTQ people are the children of a loving God, as God does not make mistakes!

Otherwise, God would not have made us, or any other group of people based upon the color of their skin, ethnicity, creed or religion. Therein lies my belief in a “higher power” which supersedes the deadly and hypocritical laws of man.

Due to the fact that my words will be recorded for posterity, long after I have passed through my life’s journey on Earth, I am compelled to state my observation regarding religious persecution, because if one looks at the historical arc of bigotry, genocide, oppression and wars throughout recorded history, one will find that more people have been killed in the name of God—or another’s God—than for any other reason in the world.

Thus, I relate to future generations of GLBTQ people and advocates, that “we” have a rightful place within society and throughout the world. But, unlike America, there are countries and societies that execute GLBTQ people due to actual or perceived sexual orientation.

This stated, I wish to make clear that GLBTQ people must remember that unity, inclusion and civility within the mix of

groups which constitute the Gay Community, must be addressed in order to counter the evil against all of us.

I have lived long enough to witness many divisions between GLBTQ people, and heard the stinging words of some who delineate and scold other groups who are too butch or too fem; are leather or queen; AC/DC and more for Bisexuals; Tranny or trash for Transgender; Gay men who refer to Lesbians as Dykes; Lesbians who do not welcome Gay men to Lesbian bars, and vice-versa. All this and more within the lexicon of the individuals and groups within the Gay Community.

Nonetheless, there is nothing wrong with any group that wants and needs their own space, as the search for most GLBTQ people is simply to find someone to love within the mix.

People must try to remember that words which demean another group, hurt just as much as physical abuse, and serve to “divide” rather than to include. Therein lie the cracks that the Religious Right and organized religions exploit to express their hatred, maintaining that all in the GLBTQ soup are deviant in social and moral behavior, and should not be granted equality within society.

As a Bisexual human being, I am mindful that I stand upon the shoulders of the innumerable and courageous GLBT pioneers and advocates for “equality” who came before me.

Fate just happened to put me in the right place, at the right time to advocate for “equality” on behalf of my bisexual brothers and sisters; our Country’s GLBT and Heterosexual veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces; Marriage Equality; Non discrimination in employment, and other issues germane to the umbrella “Gay Community.”

Bisexual people have always made enormous contributions of benefit to the larger Gay Community; yet, historically we are marginalized by many in both the Gay Community and society.

To counter the marginalization, we bisexual people must use the “key of visibility” to enlighten and educate the masses, as regards to their preconceived misconceptions of Bisexuality.

For the record, I state that bisexuality is NOT a counterfeit behavior or a phase. It is a true sexual orientation of physical and emotional attraction to both genders; and to people of different sexual orientations. It is fluid and runs on a continuum throughout a person’s life.

I believe some of the apprehension to a person’s bisexual orientation lies within the mindset of people who oppose the concept of bisexual people having "heterosexual privilege.”

In turn, the “fear” of the possible loss of love to another gender or persons of different sexual orientations weigh heavy upon folks who may be in a relationship with a bisexual person. But, this fear is unfounded, as the loss of love exists in any relationship, regardless of sexual orientations.

Today, the love of my life of 25 years is a heterosexual woman named Claudia Van Putten, whom I love with all my heart and soul. As a bisexual person, I have been doubly blessed to know the love of both men and women during my life’s journey.

And, I have always reminded myself that it is emotionally unhealthy to “compare” one love to another, as all that matters in the affairs of the heart is the "love" itself. Not how much stronger or weaker, as all loves are like a snowflake or a fingerprint: each is unique, and none the same as another.

As a Bisexual person, I feel the "label" component of my sexual orientation is necessary to express, despite my wish at times not to use labels for the purpose of delineating my sexual orientation. I know it stands as a contradiction, but I do so, as it has been my observation in life that it is easier for people to see and think of people and things in terms of black and white; and also to compartmentalize them into a neat mental box.

Thus, for the record, whomever may read my words, please know that I have done all that I could in my life to make this world a better place in which to live for all of God's GLBTQ children.

Always remember that all GLBTQ people have a rightful place in the world, and should always be afforded "equality," as God does NOT make mistakes!

I extend my love to all advocates that fight the continual battles for human and civil rights for GLBTQ people; and people of all colors, creeds and religions, as good and evil are a "constant" that will always exist and require constant vigilance.

Lastly, I leave all to remember that as human beings, we have more in common than what keeps us apart, by sharing the eloquent and truthful words of wisdom of one of my heroes, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, who said:

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. "

Carpe Diem,

Cliff

Autobiography of Clifton Francis Arnesen, Jr. Bisexual Activist & GLBT Veterans Advocate

I was born a Roman Catholic in Jersey City, New Jersey on Thanksgiving Day, November 25, 1948, into a family that constituted an alcoholic father with the same name as me. Cliff was Norwegian, Episcopalian, a Merchant Marine and longshoreman on the docks of Brooklyn. He always carried a gun, was involved with the Mafia who controlled the docks, and sometimes went out to sea on cargo ships for weeks at a time.

Conversely, my mother, Juliette Marie Rouilliard, born a Roman Catholic on January 25, 1918 in Fall River, Massachusetts, was French Canadian and survived the deadly Influenza Pandemic of 1918, which killed 650,000 people in the U.S. At age thirteen, she spent a year in a Catholic Convent's hospital after being stricken with Rheumatic Fever, which did irreparable damage to her heart and severely limited her ability to work.

I also had a sister named Diana , who died as an infant before I was born; and two half brothers, Kenneth and Richard. Kenneth was 6 years my senior; and Richard was 12 years older than me.

Richard lived with an Uncle in New York, and joined the Army. He served two tours of duty in Vietnam as a "Forward Artillery Observer," and was awarded the Purple Heart. Richard proudly served a total of 25 years in the United States Army, and died at Walter Reed Army Hospital in 1993 at age 58, of suspected Agent Orange poisoning from his service in Vietnam.

Alternately, Kenneth was always in trouble. At age six he was in the kitchen in the apartment in New Jersey, playing with matches and lit a curtain on fire which quickly began to spread.

The smoke began to approach my room where I lay in a crib. My mother had briefly gone across the street to buy groceries, so Kenneth ran to call the fire department on a fire/police box

outside the apartment, as the hot flames and smoke continued quickly to the front door of my room.

Suddenly, a big man walking down the street saw the smoke, and busted through the front door. He ran up the stairs through smoke and flames, and heard me scream. Then he picked me up from my crib, ran down the stairs and put me into my Mother's arms just as the Fire Department arrived. The man quickly disappeared into a crowd of spectators, and was never seen again. After the fire, my father and mother moved to Brooklyn, and Kenneth was placed in a school for boys.

At around the age of three, my violent alcoholic father threw me against a wall, and my loving mother was forced by the State of New York to place me in an orphanage for my protection.

In 1954, at age six, I was discharged from the orphanage and sent back to live with my mother in a roach infested, one room apartment with a small kitchen. Mom was on welfare due to her bad heart, and had separated from my dangerous father, who was ordered by a Family Court Judge to pay \$25.00 a week for child support, but also had visitation rights.

After a couple of months at home, Mom decided to take me out of public school to try and school me at home, She did so because I was hyperactive, had fights with other children who beat me up and stole my milk money, and could not read or write very well at the age of nine.

During the last year of the three that Mom and I lived together, she sought advice from the Family State Court as to what would be in my best interest, due to the fact that my father continued to drink and beat me with a belt and fists when he moved back in with my mother. But, the Court was powerless to arrest him, as Mom would not press charges for fear of our lives.

So, Mom left my father again, and we moved to another seedy apartment.

Realizing that I needed special remedial attention, and understanding the limitations of trying to raise me alone on welfare with a bad heart, at age ten, Mom placed me in the Predominately African-American Wiltwyck School for Boys, in Esopus, NY.

During the three years I spent at Wiltwyck, I met and came to know the late First Lady, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, who was on the Board of Directors; and who held annual summer picnics for the 100 boys at her cottage estate at Val-Kil, Hyde Park, New York.

Wiltwyck was also the same school which the late African-American Claude Brown attended before me, and who later became a professor and author of the 1965 best selling book "Manchild In The Promised Land." Also, Heavyweight Boxing Champion of the World, Mr. Floyd Patterson, attended Wiltwyck before me, as well.

Several times, I, along with a dozen other boys visited Floyd Patterson at his home/gym in New Paltz, NY, which was located a short distance from the Wiltwyck School. And, I came to know Mr. Patterson at Wiltwyck, and kept in touch with him as an adult.

While at Wiltwyck, I received much love and guidance from the predominately African-American staff, who gave me the emotional support I needed for my self esteem. Thus, I began to do well in school, sports, and how to get along with the other boys which, at times, was not easy to do, as I was a "minority within a minority."

As a result, I experienced discrimination from some of the African-American boys due to the color of my skin. But, love won out, because staff and counselors would protect me from the mean boys that tried to hurt me. I really came to love and care for some of the Counselors, because they truly cared and loved me as a human being. And, I also found another kind of love at Wiltwyck.

As a boy, I did not know in full what the term Bisexual meant, but felt it's meaning in my heart when I met an Altar Boy named Richie; and had a crush on a cute boy at Wiltwyck, as well.

I recall in May of 1961, I began study to become an Altar boy, and was confirmed and took the name of John, after John the Baptist who Baptized Jesus. But, I became confused during my studies, because of the dual forces of good and bad at play.

I felt good and very excited because I would be able to serve side by side with Richie. But, also felt bad because I felt like a hypocrite , as the Catholic Church viewed me as a sinner due to my desire towards boys. One moment I felt joy because of the "natural" love in my heart; and the next moment, I felt a forced fear of God for the "sin" of loving other boys, albeit vicariously.

I felt very confused by the message of the Catholic Church. But, I needed and wanted a belief system, because belief in a higher power somehow put a kind of order in my life that had been missing.

But, deep doubts persisted. How could I believe in something I could not see or touch? Was I being deceived by men in robes? How could I reconcile or forgive God for letting a little old lady I saw get killed by a bus back in Brooklyn? And, why did God permit children to starve in Africa, or let a baby die of cancer, or fall out of a window and die. What kind of loving God was that, I often reflected, as I studied my Latin in preparation for serving my first Mass with Richie.

The following Sunday, all thoughts of sin vanished from my consciousness when I rang the bell and preceded Richie through the oval shaped entrance to the front altar. He looked so angelic in his black and white robe, offset by the shine of his blond hair. He genuflected and bowed down at the altar. Then he looked directly into my eyes on cue to begin the Mass. I thought I was going to pass out as my heart raced with desire. But, during Mass, I tripped over my robe and dropped the Bible and its

holder on the altar floor, because I had momentarily been distracted looking at Richie. I felt terribly embarrassed, but soon relieved, because Richie smiled at me as if to say, "Don't worry".

After Mass ended, Richie invited me to his house to meet his parents and his brother Mike. I felt jealous and sad as I sat in the living room talking with his family. Jealous, because he had so much love and stability; and sad because I could never tell him of the secret love I felt for him out of fear of rejection and ridicule.

Hence, I knew I had to love him from a distance. "Too bad religion and society repressed the kind of love I felt in my heart." I thought, when I shook Richie's soft hand good-bye until the next Sunday.

Alternately, I also had a crush on a very cute blond English girl actress named Hayley Mills, whom I saw in two movies, titled "Pollyanna" in 1960, and "The Parent Trap" in 1961.

Sometimes I would lay in bed and imagine kissing both of them. It was very confusing, but I had to keep my desire and fantasy for both a secret, as there was no one to tell or trust with what was in my heart.

At age thirteen, I was discharged from Wiltwyck and transitioned to a halfway home named the Floyd Patterson House, located at 208 E 18th Street in Manhattan, New York. Mr. Patterson and some of his family came to visit us during the dedication of the house in his honor, as did Director, John Huston, who directed the movie, "Moby Dick."

While at Patterson House, I attended Benjamin Franklin High School in Spanish Harlem on East 116th Street, but was always truant, because I felt fearful due to the gangs that sold drugs and carried guns and knives to school.

At age sixteen, I was discharged from Patterson House, and sent back to live with my mother in Brooklyn.

At seventeen, I dropped out of High School in the tenth grade, and talked my mother into signing a "waiver" for me to join the Army, in an attempt to escape from a life of poverty, filled with despair and devoid of hope.

I promised my mother that I would finish High School in the Army, as she told me how important it was to get an education. Mom reluctantly agreed, because she was afraid I would be killed in the undeclared war between the United States and Vietnam, which was escalating at a rapid pace.

However, several weeks into basic training at Fort Dix, New Jersey, I realized that although I had managed to escape from the oppressive environment in Brooklyn, I had also painted myself into a corner. I felt cornered because I agonized over the painful necessity of having to conceal the "attraction and affection" I felt in my heart toward other soldiers.

Also, fear was a constant reality, as I was well aware that I could be discharged or court-martialed for perjury, because I lied on the Army entrance questionnaire which stated : "Are you a homosexual; and have you ever engaged in sexual activities with a member of the same sex?"

Nonetheless, I held my fears in check and completed basic training; went on to Advanced Infantry Training School (AIT), earned a military high school diploma; and finally, based upon my performance evaluation, was selected by my superiors to attend Trainee Leadership School. But, I never made it to the school.

Instead, I went AWOL because I found out that my Mother's life was in imminent danger from yet another alcoholic man she'd met who physically beat her; and because I felt psychologically trapped in the military due to the tremendous stress and fear of

trying to hide my bisexual orientation and attraction to other soldiers.

A wave of worry passed rapidly through my mind when I put on a newly pressed Army Class A dress uniform and hastily packed some civilian clothes into a duffel bag. I thought about how unbearable it had become for me to carry the burden of hiding my true feelings toward beautiful men on base. But most of all, I wondered about my Mother's safety or lack thereof.

I quickly slipped out of the barracks and hailed a base cab that took me to the Peter Pan Bus Terminal. Then, I boarded the bus for New York.

"How come your home, son?" Mom asked, looking quite startled after opening the door to answer my knock.

"I got a weekend pass," I lied, simultaneously recoiling when I noticed a black and blue circle around her right eye.

"What happened to your eye?" I asked, alarmed at the sight of her swollen eyelid.

"Oh, nothing," she said, "I slipped in the bath tub."

"What really happened, Mom?" I demanded, looking around the room to see if we were alone.

"Don't worry, Tom's not here. He went to his son's house last night," she assured me.

"What happened?" I asked again, the anger building inside of me in anticipation of her answer.

"First promise me that you won't do anything rash," she pleaded.

"Okay!" I cried out impatiently.

"Tom punched me last night while he was drunk," she admitted softly. I hugged her and asked, "Why do you stay with the bastard?"

"Because I feel sorry for him and need him financially," Mom replied, awkwardly.

Suddenly, our conversation was interrupted by someone knocking loudly upon the front door. Mom slowly opened it to find Tom standing at the threshold grasping a bouquet of flowers in one hand.

"I'm sorry for... " he began, and stopped abruptly when he saw me standing behind Mom.

"Don't be sorry, I'll get a rubber mat so I won't slip again," Mom quickly injected so Tom could hear.

"Cliff's home on a weekend furlough and will be staying overnight," she added, turning to wink at me with her good eye.

I took her cue. But, during the course of the night, I had to summon all of the willpower within my being not to beat the shit out of Tom—or kill him because I was so angry and distraught that yet another man would hurt my mother.

Feeling satisfied with Mom's assurances that she was safe, at least for the moment, I left her house during the evening of the next day.

Realizing that I had to find a place to stay, I took a train to Greenwich Village where I went to a Gay bar named Julius' on West 10th Street, opposite another gay bar called The Ninth Circle.

Entering the bar, I passed by the smiling bouncer who didn't bother to check my ID because I was in uniform, which is what I had hoped for because the legal drinking age was 21.

I took a seat at the bar, ordered a beer and searched the room to see if I could make eye contact with someone.

Soon, a handsome gentleman around forty, sat next to me and introduced himself as Ben, who asked if I was home on leave. I told him I was for two weeks, and he asked where I was staying. I told him I was going to find a room after I left the bar, and a small job somewhere to earn a little money.

Then, Ben looked me over from head to toe and said, "Well, you certainly don't look like a hustler, Soldier Boy. I suppose we might be able to help you out."

"We?" I asked.

"Yes, just wait here I'll be right back," he directed.

Returning with two guys, Ben introduced me to his lover Alfred, and then to his gorgeous 21 year-old blond nephew, Scott, who was visiting from Colorado for the weekend. I immediately sensed from the glances Scott and I exchanged that he and I might get together and dance.

"You can stay with me and Alfred" Ben said, causing me to disengage my eye contact with Scott. "And, I have a friend who will give you a job as a waiter at the Reenza Café on Christopher Street," he added.

I asked Ben if the Café was a Gay Café, and he said it was a place where many of the gay and straight people from the Andy Warhol crowd hung out. Then, Ben told me and Scott to have some fun and not to worry about anything.

At that, I asked Scott to slow dance. The night slipped by quickly as we held each other close and kissed while Ben hovered about, teasing our young budding romance.

I didn't want to let go of Scott when the lights began to flicker at 3:45 a.m. to signal last call. So, I gently pinched Scott's curvaceous, firm butt and we kissed. Then, we all left the bar and got into a cab that took us to Ben's very large apartment on the lower part of Greenwich Village.

Once inside, Ben told me to put my duffel bag in a spare bedroom and to then join everyone in the living room to smoke some marijuana and listen to music. After I'd taken a couple of puffs, I took hold of Scott's hand. Ben got up from the sofa and shook Alfred out of his stupor and led him into their bedroom, bidding goodnight to Scott and me.

I gently held Scott in my arms on the sofa and we kissed. He pulled me up off the couch with his hand, and we went into the second bedroom. Then, we slowly undressed each other and fell on the bed naked, searching every inch of each others bodies. Then I passed out!

When I awoke in the early afternoon, I peered through squinted eyes to see Scott packing his bags, preparing to return to Colorado. Feeling cheated by alcohol, pot and time, I asked him to stay, but he said his parents were expecting him and he left without even giving me a kiss. I felt depressed when he closed the door because I knew would never see him again. Sadly, I realized that just as in the straight world, emotions and feelings oftentimes took second place to a "one night stand."

I felt much better that evening after I put on civilian clothes and Ben took me over to the Reenza Café, where his friend, the manager gave me a job as a waiter. Ben had made a promise to me that he would not mention anything about the Army.

Poets, artists, beatniks, philosophers, singers, and folks of all colors and religions frequented the Reenza Café, and spent many hours talking about philosophy, music, arts, the war in Vietnam; the women's rights movement, the civil rights movement, and more. All to the background of 60's music, and

the sweet pungent smell of marijuana and coffee that filled the air. The mixture of so many diverse people was wonderful.

When my shift ended, some people would tip me money, and others would hand me a couple of joints or hash to smoke. I would go the bathroom and have a couple of hits on a joint and blow the smoke into the exhaust fan, and return to join in on the conversations at a round table of 4 to 6 people.

During the two weeks that followed, I called my Mother several times to check on her. She said she was okay and I told her I loved her. But, my life seemed surreal and dreamlike due to the heavy amounts of alcohol and drugs I consumed and the emotionally unfulfilling relationships I experienced with both men and women from the Café and private after hours Gay bars.

As a result of my bisexual experiences, I came to realize that I was physically drawn to pretty boys who looked like girls; and to girls who had short hair and looked like pretty boys.

Although I had the best of both worlds sexually, emotionally I felt empty, as I considered myself gay rather bisexual, due to peer pressure from the gay crowd to conform to a collective stereotype of behavior and thinking, which didn't leave much room for me to be me.

Additionally, I didn't like the flirtatious and coy games that the straight girls played when they batted their eyelashes, exposed their thighs when they sat down in a tight skirt, or wore heavy amounts of make-up to make themselves look "pretty" – just as I had seen my Mom do when I was a boy. But I also knew that some of the gay boys did similar things in order to attract attention, including wearing makeup!

Feeling confused about my sexual identity, burned out by the booze and drugs, and aware that I could be considered a deserter in "time of war," I finally surrendered to a Military Police patrol unit at Times Square in Manhattan.

The MP's immediately handcuffed me and drove me back to Fort Dix, where I was put under house arrest in my Advanced Infantry Training Unit, while my anti-gay Company Commander deliberated what punishment I would face for being AWOL.

I searched my soul to summon the courage to tell the truth. Then, I went to the Company Commander and told him I was gay.

Several days later, I was transferred to the Stockade on the base to await punishment. Then the order came down from my Company Commander that I was to receive a Summary Court Martial on the AWOL offense. I was shocked! Why the hell couldn't the Army just discharge me, instead of imprison me, I pondered with fear.

Thereafter, I was interrogated by Federal agents from the Army Central Intelligence Division. (CID) It was during the interrogation that the agents told me that they thought I was a coward who made up the story of being gay in order to avoid combat duty in Vietnam.

At that, and to my utter dismay they told me they needed explicit "proof" in the form of an illegal sexual act in order for me to satisfy their thinking that I was not lying.

Needless to say I was shocked and bewildered that the agents would "blackmail" me because they did not believe the admission of my sexual orientation.

Therefore, due to the ultimatum by the agents—and against my inner moral will— I committed a very brief sexual masturbation act with a Heterosexual soldier who wanted to get out of the Army because he said he was a conscientious objector after being drafted, and also had gone AWOL because the Army would not let him go.

Afterwards, the other soldier and I were forced to sign joint "confessions." Then, I was ordered to seek the council of a Chaplain and a psychiatrist.

The next day, I had a brief talk with the Chaplain, who simply told me that God still loved me despite my "sin." The Chaplain's words stung my heart, as I was persuaded to the core of my soul that all "love" had to be okay with God because God did not make mistakes! Thus, I was not a mistake!

However, it was during the interview with the psychiatrist that I felt a sense of relief and a glimpse of understanding when the officer asked, "Private Arnesen, do you like both boys and girls?"

In response, I simply answered, "Yes" After my reply he asked, "To whom are you most attracted to, boys or girls?"

Without hesitation, I told him my feelings were equal, because I was physically and emotionally attracted to both genders.

Then, he looked into my eyes and warned that I could be discharged as a "Homosexual" because the military made no distinction between a person who was "Homosexual or Bisexual."

Leaving his office under armed escort, I felt confused and lost, as I thought of myself as gay, due to the rigid codes of sexual behavior and identification within both the straight and gay communities. I thought I had to "identify" as gay because I didn't know any bisexual people; and lacked "acceptance" in the gay community if I told anyone I liked girls, too.

Then, one morning shortly after the interrogations and meetings, a young soldier with a loaded .45 caliber pistol entered my 8x10 cement cell, handcuffed me, and ordered me at gunpoint to march several miles through Fort Dix to a courthouse, while taunting that he would "shoot to kill" me if I tried to escape.

Arriving at the court house, I was court-martialed and sentenced to a year at hard labor in the stockade—of which I served a total of three months in "segregated confinement," as other prisoners in the general prison population had threatened to rape and kill me.

During that time, I was shocked when my father came to see me, and told me how I had ruined my life because I went AWOL.

After completing the reduced sentence, I was sent back to my Advanced Infantry Training unit to face further threats of death and psychological intimidation by my superiors and fellow soldiers.

Finally, on Wednesday, January 25, 1967, I was given an "Undesirable Discharge" based on homosexuality, which effectively precluded my receiving all future VA medical or educational benefits.

Then, I was escorted outside the gates of Fort Dix by two armed military policemen. But in a final act of defiance, due to the pain in my heart and humiliation I suffered at the hands of the military, I took a lighter out of my pocket, set fire to the "Undesirable Discharge," and threw it on the ground. Then I hitched a ride back to Brooklyn with nothing but a subway token in my pocket. I was a man without a Country!

Returning home, I nervously told my mother I had been discharged because I liked guys, which she already knew, because I had previously admitted to her that I had played "doctor" with some of the boys when I attended Wiltwyck School and the Floyd Patterson House.

Fortunately, instead of being angry or blaming herself for my "condition" (like so many parents do) she told me that she loved me and it would remain our "secret."

But, five months later, my mother died of breast cancer at the age of 49. And, it was during her funeral –which my half-brother Kenneth also attended– that my sense of loss, despair and grief, burning in my heart, turned to utter devastation when my drunken father angrily told me that he knew about my "secret," when he visited me in the Army Stockade.

At that moment, I realized that I was an orphan again, due to the loss of my beloved mother who had deserved more of joy than pain in her life; and now my father, as there was “no point of return” to any hint of love between us. Only a dreaded divide where love between a father and son lay waste to emptiness of the soul. The feelings of the absence of wished for love, had punched a hole in my heart.

Alternately, I felt a deep sadness and sense of pity for my father as an alcoholic, due to the demons visited upon him. Demons so dark in force and anger–their reasons unknown to me, both as a child and as an adult.

I walked away from my father to the room where my mother lay peaceful in a coffin in a beautiful blue dress, and I bent over and kissed her on the forehead in a final good-bye, while praying to God to keep her in His eternal embrace.

Then, I turned away to see people and relatives leaving the funeral parlor until it was empty–with the exception of my father. He was so drunk, that I helped him to his apartment a couple of blocks away.

My father sat down on a couch ten feet in front of me, and began to pour drinks from a bottle of whiskey, while talking of things that might have been. That he once truly loved my mother, but there were other men in her life; and another woman in his, whom I had met and was also an alcoholic.

I was fairly drunk myself, as I asked my father for answers to so many unknown events in his life and mine–searching for the

reasons of his anger and beatings upon me as a child.

My father tried to answer, but slowly slipped sideways upon the couch in slow motion, until he passed out. I stood up from my chair, and walked to a closet where he kept a loaded hunting rifle, and took all the bullets out. Then, I turned to look at him unconscious on the couch, said a prayer for him, opened the apartment door, and never saw my father again!

To survive, I stayed with friends and held odd jobs in New York for four years. Then, I moved to Albany, New York in 1972.

There, at the age of 22, I fell in love for the first time with a 17-year-old gay man named Donnie, whom I met in a gay bar on a hot August night.

I recall dancing to a song named “The first Time Ever I saw Your Face” by Roberta Flack. And, as we danced slowly to the song with our bodies pressed to each other, I gazed into his eyes and we drew closer and embraced in a beautiful long kiss. I instantly felt a warmth envelope my whole body that I had never felt before. The kiss shook me to the core of my being and I thought I would pass out from the electricity that shot throughout my mind and body.

After the bar closed, we went to the apartment I shared with a Gay African-American man who was a friend and roommate I had met in the same gay bar. Then, Donnie and I made love all night long.

The next morning, Donnie told me he lived with his parents in a nearby small town in Gloversville, NY, but he had to go to Canada for a couple of days, and wanted to see me again when he returned.

During the three days he was gone, my mind raced with an enormous sense of anticipation of his return. But, I was also scared, as I thought of myself as Gay despite the fact that I had

slept with girls. I agonized over my dilemma, because I wanted to be truthful and have no secrets between us. But fear gripped me, as I did not know any other Bisexual people, and there was no such thing as a bisexual support group. So, I thought to myself that I would eventually tell him that I was attracted to girls, as well.

Upon Donnie's return, we started dating, and then he moved out of his parents house and we got an apartment together.

During Thanksgiving, his parents invited us to their home for dinner and my birthday, along with his younger sister, Karen, who knew Donnie was Gay and loved him.

To my surprise, Donnie's parents treated both of us with respect and acceptance, as they knew their son was gay.

During Thanksgiving dinner, I told his parents that I loved their son. His mother nodded, and his father said, "Some people like a Cadillac, and some people liked a Chevy. My son's happiness and safety is all I care about."

The next day, we returned to our apartment in Albany. And, while lying in bed together watching a TV program of some boys playing around in a park. my secret came out. The scene of the boys playing with their parents, triggered the apprehension component of my being Bisexual, and surfaced when I casually mentioned to Donnie that I had always wanted to have a son to take to the zoo, play catch with, go fishing and more. Just as I had wished my own father had done when I was a boy.

At that, Donnie drew me close and kissed me. Then, he whispered that he loved me, and could not bear the thought of me leaving him for a girl. I was petrified, as I also identified as Gay at the time, and could not bear the thought of losing him to another guy, as I realized I had confused him by my comment of having wanted a son. I was so deeply in love with Donnie and so very afraid to lose him.

But, over the months, I began drinking heavy due to internal conflicts and lost my job as an orderly at a nursing home. Finally, Donnie left me and went home to his parents house. My heart was broken.

The loss of my "first love" still exists within the core my heart today, and was one of the "forces" in my life which drove me to advocate for human and civil rights for my fellow GLBT brothers and sisters.

I left Albany, and moved to Boston, in 1973, where met a guy in a Gay bar who let me stay with him. It was a platonic relationship, and I worked odd jobs and painted apartments to pay my share of the rent.

In 1976, I petitioned the Department of the Army for an upgrade in discharge, via President Jimmy Carter's Amnesty Act for people who were anti-war and had fled to Canada and other places to avoid the draft; and others who were conscientious objectors based on religious beliefs of not killing other people.

My petition was granted by the Army Review Board, and my "Undesirable Discharge" was changed to "General Under Honorable Conditions," in 1977.

But, the psychological damage and feelings of humiliation of having to constantly lie to my friends, loved ones, and prospective employers had taken its toll on my self esteem.

Consequently, to dull the pain in my heart, I began twenty-two years of self destructive abuse with drugs and alcohol, until I finally ended up having "blackouts," which forced me to seek medical treatment at a VA hospital in Boston, MA, in 1983.

As I lay in a bed with needles in my veins to ease dehydration, tremors, hallucinations and heart palpitations, a doctor simply told me I would soon die from liver failure if I continued to drink a quart of vodka a day.

Not wanting to die, I attended AA meetings for a year.

Knowing that idle hands were the Devils' workshop, I went on to become the first person in my family to go to college, and graduated from Bunker Hill Community College in Boston, MA, with an Associate Degree in Human Services; and a Certificate in Mental Health in 1987.

Later, during 1988, I began taking one evening course in Psychology at Harvard University Extension School. And, I secured a job as a sexton at a Unitarian Church in Boston, which rented out rooms for group meetings for extra income.

I was on duty when members of the New England Gay & Lesbian Veterans held a meeting at the Church, which I sat in on. After the meeting, I dropped my course at Harvard, ran for office and was elected president of the New England Gay & Lesbian Veterans, which was co-founded in 1985 by Gay Vietnam Veteran, Bob Derry.

Thereafter, during the winter of 1988, a VA nurse named Sheila Spicer, arranged a meeting between a dozen members of the New England Gay & Lesbian Veterans, with Marine Corps Vietnam combat veteran, Dr. Paul Camacho, Associate Director of the William Joiner Center for the Study of War and Social Consequences, University of Massachusetts, to discuss the possibility of GL&Bi veterans representation before Congress in Washington, D.C.

After three hours of emotional dialogue on the issue of Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual military veterans in the U.S. Military, Dr. Camacho agreed to let us participate in the upcoming Eighth Congressional Speaker's Conference on the Concerns of Vietnam Veterans, which was held annually in Washington, DC.

Subsequently, on Wednesday, May 3, 1989, I, along with the late Mr. Stan Berry, a gay Vietnam veteran representing the San Diego Veterans Association, was able to finally advocate

on behalf of our country's Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual military veterans.

On that day, I was deeply honored and humbled to become the first and only "openly bisexual veteran" in U.S. History to testify before members of the U.S. Congress, during formal hearings held before the U.S. House Committee on Veterans Affairs: Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations – addressing health care issues of HIV/AIDS, Agent Orange, drug and alcohol abuse, homelessness; and the necessity to change ALL less-than-honorable homosexual and bisexual discharges to "Honorable," given to Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Veterans, based on perceived or actual sexual orientation(s).

Likewise, a year later, on Wednesday, May 16, 1990, in my dual roles as President of the "renamed" New England Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Veterans, Inc., Boston, MA; and as a Patient Services Assistant with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, I once again testified as an openly bisexual veteran before Congress, as part of a special HIV/AIDS panel.

I called upon members of Congress for increased funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as humane and compassionate treatment for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Heterosexual Veterans who suffered from HIV/AIDS.

The AIDS/HIV panel also included Ms. Ilonka Thomas, HIV/AIDS Coordinator, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, VA Medical Center, Boston, MA; Mr. Chuck Schoen, Public Affairs Officer, representing Veterans C.A.R.E. Redwood Empire, and the only predominately gay Alexander Hamilton, American Legion Post 448 in San Francisco; and Mr. Ken Huntington, AKA Ron Rasmussen, President of the Texas Gay Veterans Association.

The next day, on Thursday, May 17, 1990, Lesbian activist, U.S. Army SSGT. Miriam Ben-Shalom, founded the National Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Veterans of America. Now known as the

American Veterans for Equal Rights (AVER); along with the assistance of co-founders, Gay Navy Ensign, Jim Woodward, President, San Diego Veterans Association; Gay Navy Ensign, Chuck Schoen, Veterans C.A.R.E. Redwood Empire; and myself, as the Bisexual President of the New England Gay, Lesbian, & Bisexual Veterans, Inc., Boston, MA.

The formation of a National advocacy organization on behalf of our Country's GLBT Veterans, turned the corner for a new chapter of "direct and expanded" advocacy for our Country's GLB military veterans and servicemembers who had no voice.

On a historical note, Lesbian activist, U.S. Army SSGT. Miriam Ben-Shalom, was the first Gay person In U.S. History to be reinstated to duty per order of the Eastern Federal District Court of the United States (1978), and finally "Released From The Custody of the United States Army as an erroneous enlistment" (1990) with no discharge despite a promotion and a commendation.

For the record, I state my feelings of love and deep appreciation to the gay and lesbian veterans who agreed to include the name "bisexual" within the national organization. They did so due to my moral insistence and personal friendship. But, more importantly, because they understood that our "collective struggle" for emancipation in the military required unity by means of expanded "inclusiveness."

During the ensuing years, I and other officers of GLBVA also maintained a very close working relationship with the late Massachusetts Congressional Delegation , which included Congressman Gerry Studds, a pioneer regarding the issue of gays in the military, Congressmen Barney Frank, U.S. Senator John F. Kerry, the late Congressman Joseph Moakley, and the late "Lion of the Senate," U.S. Senator Ted Kennedy.

On Sunday, March 15, 1992, in an effort to educate and enlighten heterosexual people on the issue of "Gays in the Military," I donned my Army fatigues and, under a state court order issued by Suffolk Superior Court Judge, Hiler Zobel, and extremely heavy police protection, I marched five miles as an out bisexual Army veteran –along with 25 members of the Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Irish Group of Boston (GLIB)– through an anti-gay, hate filled crowd of a half million people in South Boston's infamous St. Patrick's Day Parade. The day was also called "Evacuation Day," in honor of General George Washington's Continental Army who drove British forces out of Boston, Massachusetts.

On May 5, 1993, I, along with members and officers of the Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Veterans, Inc., Boston, MA, laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery to honor ALL of our country's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Transgendered and Heterosexual veterans who died in service to our country.

After placing the wreath in front of the white marbled Tomb, I looked around at the endless sea of bright white crosses that dotted the cemetery, and my thoughts wandered to remember the late Air Force T/Sgt. Leonard Matlovich, whom I had seen lay a wreath in the very same spot as I during the 1987 March on Washington for Lesbian & Gay Rights, and whose epitaph on his tombstone had inspired me so, which read: "When I was in the military, they gave me a medal for killing two men, and a discharge for loving one."

Unfortunately, shortly after the wreath laying ceremony, the Parent America Legion called it "an act of desecration," and later submitted a bill before the U.S. House Committee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, to permanently ban GL&Bi people from ever serving in the U.S. Military. Nevertheless, the National Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Veterans of America; and the New England Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Veterans, Inc, Boston, pressed on with our collective advocacy.

Hence, for the first time in U.S. history, on May 5, 1997, I, along with four gay veterans, met face to face inside the Pentagon with Mr. Frederick Pang, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Management Policy, along with his aide, Colonel David Schreier, Principal Director and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Personnel Policy, to discuss our collective dissatisfaction with the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue" policy.

The four Gay veterans were: WW II Navy veteran, James Darby, National President of the Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Veterans of America; Marine Corps Cpl. Edward Clayton, VP, Public Affairs; Navy Veteran, Mel Tips, Treasurer, and Terry Tobias of the Veterans Advisory Council.

As the only openly bisexual officer of GLBVA, I was deeply honored to attend this historic meeting in which we opened up dialogue by pointing out to Mr. Pang that homosexual and bisexual related discharges had increased to an all-time high in 1996, when 850 servicemembers were discharged due to their actual or perceived sexual orientation(s).

During the hour long meeting, we expressed our dissatisfaction with the DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL, DON'T PURSUE policy and asked Mr. Pang and Colonel Schreier to consider the following issues and recommendations :

(1) To examine the possibility of forming an independent military review board to investigate violations of the DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL, DON'T PURSUE policy, and to hold base commanders and superior officers responsible for violations which occur under their command.

(2) To consider the repeal of the sodomy statutes contained in Article 125 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice—which is the lynch-pin for discharge from the military, because it is arbitrarily applied and enforced against gay and bisexual service members.

(3) To end efforts by the military to try and recover expenses for training from service members who had been discharged for being gay, lesbian or bisexual.

(4) To improve medical care for veterans who suffer with HIV and AIDS.

(5) To consider upgrading all less-than-honorable discharges based on actual or perceived GLB sexual orientations.

Two days later, on May 7, 1997, officers and members of the National GLBVA and the New England GL&B Veterans, Boston, held another historic meeting inside the Old Executive Office Building in Washington, DC, with Mr. Richard Socarides, White House Special Assistant and gay Senior Advisor to President Bill Clinton.

Once again, we presented the same set of issues to Mr. Socarides as we'd discussed with Mr. Pang and Colonel Schreier at the Pentagon. In turn, Mr. Socarides voiced his strong support for our struggle to lift the ban, and assured us that we would have continued future access to his office to discuss the inhumane "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue" policy.

A week after the two historic meetings with White House and Pentagon officials, the "Washington Post" featured a front page article which stated that the Pentagon was reviewing the enforcement – not the merits – of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue" policy.

And, a week after the "Washington Post" article, I received a personal letter from President William Jefferson Clinton, dated May 21, 1997, in which the President wrote:

“Dear Cliff,

Thank you for sharing your thoughts regarding gays and lesbians.

Throughout my life, I have sought to heighten public awareness and promote inclusion in order to send a powerful message of equality and acceptance to people everywhere.

Increased opportunity makes citizens more productive, building stronger communities and a stronger nation. I believe that we must continue to help people rise as far as their talents and determination can take them so that we can make the most out of our great diversity.

As I continue working to end discrimination and protect the civil rights of every citizen in our society, I appreciate knowing your views.”

Sincerely,

Bill Clinton

While grateful that President Clinton had taken time to write about his efforts to work "to end discrimination and protect the civil rights of every citizen in our society," I could not help but think about his failure to "speak up" against the Department of Defense, the Joint Chief's of Staff, the Pentagon and the Congress, to sign an Executive Order as promised to lift the inhumane ban on Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual people in the military.

In my view, if the brass at the Pentagon didn't like it, then President Clinton, as Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Armed Forces, should have fired or demanded the resignation of all who resisted—just as President Harry Truman had done when he issued Executive Order 9981 to desegregate the U.S. Armed Forces for African-Americans in 1948.

Further, President Clinton's failure to sign an Executive Order ran even deeper for me due to my humiliating experiences in the Military. So, on Sunday, April 25, 1993, I put on my Class A dress army uniform and, along with my partner/girlfriend Claudia, shook hands with President Clinton in the North End of Boston.

Seconds later, I handed one of the President's Secret Service agents a copy of my written congressional testimony –which I had submitted to Senator Sam Nunn's Senate Armed Services Committee Hearings on Gays in the Military in March of 1993 – in an effort to persuade President Clinton to sign the Executive Order to lift the inhumane ban on Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual servicemembers in the Military.

This said, I did not write back to President Clinton. But, had I responded, I would have submitted the last two paragraphs of which I concluded my May 16, 1990, testimony before the US House Committee on Veterans Affairs: Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations:

“It is not in the best interest of the United States Military, nor our society, to maintain impediments and exclusionary policies toward gay, lesbian and bisexual people who want to serve our country.

Furthermore, silence and indifference on matters of human and civil rights by institutions that govern our society, is tantamount to immoral complicity in the perpetuation of prejudice, discrimination and fear.”

Personally, I feel that the inhumane "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue, Don't Harass" military policy, which was codified into law by the U.S. Congress and placed into effect in 1993, was directly responsible for the brutal and cowardly murders of U.S. Navy Seaman Allen Schindler; and U.S. Army PFC. Barry Winchell –both murdered in cold blood by their fellow servicemembers due to their actual or perceived sexual orientations; and for the

discharge of more than 14,000 Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual American servicemembers.

Moreover, since the attacks by terrorists on the United States on September 11, 2001, the U.S. is now engaged in a global "War on Terrorism," and our country needs every patriotic American to defend our Democracy.

Yet, Former President George W. Bush had directed branches of the US Armed Forces to maintain a "Stop-Loss" policy which permitted the military to retain servicemembers on active duty. while still permitting the discharge of GLBT servicemembers under the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

And, prior to taking office, President Bush said, "I'm a Don't Ask, Don't Tell, man," when asked his view about the inhumane policy by a reporter for the "New York Times."

What Bush failed to understand is the fact that Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender people have fought in all of America's wars with great honor and distinction, and shed their blood and died on strange battlefields alongside their heterosexual servicemembers in defense of our great Nation.

This stated,, the U.S. Congress had mandated that the U.S. Military be able to simultaneously wage war on two fronts. But, with a military strength of approximately 2 million active and reserve servicemembers, this mandate is impossible to maintain; and points out the illogical and cruel double standards of the military, as it continued to discharge GLB&T servicemembers during a global conflict which now threatens the security of civilization, itself.

On another note, I wish all my GLB&T brother and sister veterans to know, that as an "openly bisexual veteran" I have taken a lot of "heat" from miscellaneous organizations and individuals for speaking up so vociferously as an out bisexual veteran.

To these organizations and individuals I sincerely state: it is my moral and ethical responsibility to speak out on the issue of bisexuals in the military and within the larger gay community, as all should know what terrible consequences people can suffer when one does not "speak out" about external and internal injustice. I only seek acceptance and recognition for ALL bisexual people who have made enormous contributions in helping to secure human and civil rights for the larger gay community.

Furthermore, as an openly bisexual veteran, I lost my job and put my life on the line during the St. Patrick's Day Parade in South Boston, and received a half dozen death threats over the years. Thus, please know that I am a "soldier" in the war against the dark forces in society and around the world, which seek to destroy the human worth and dignity of "ALL" my bisexual, gay, lesbian and transgender brothers and sisters.

To further illustrate the bisexual component of the equation regarding "Gays in the Military," I bring to your attention the Department of Defense Directive Number 1304.26. It is the official Department of Defense statement on the Separation & Discharge of Bisexuals In the Military under the inhumane "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," policy which states:

(1) "Homosexual statements: You make a statement that demonstrates a propensity or intent or engage in homosexual acts. This may include language or behavior that a reasonable person would believe that a person tends to convey that you are a homosexual or bisexual."

(2) "A member may be separated for violations of laws or regulations regarding sexual conduct of members of the Armed Forces. For example, engaging or attempting to engage in a homosexual act or soliciting another to engage in such an act; for stating that he or she is a homosexual or bisexual, or words to that effect; or for marrying or attempting to marry an individual of the same sex."

Unfortunately, the military maintains myopic vision and sees things in black and white, and has not a clue as to the "gray area" which exists in between—Bisexuality!

Personally, I wish we as human beings did not have to label our sexual orientation(s). But, as is the case in the U.S. Military where bisexuality was "specifically" encoded as a basis for discharge, I had to "speak up" when it was not fully integrated in the equation of the generic "Gays" in the Military,"espoused by many gay organizations and the gay and straight media – whether intentional or unintentional.

Therefore, in order to secure human and civil rights within society—not special rights—I submit that all GLBT people should maintain the mindset that "we are family." Otherwise, we end up shooting each other in the foot!

So, to the "family" I state that bisexuality is NOT a counterfeit behavior. It is a true "sexual orientation." The fear lies within the mindset of people that oppose the concept of bisexual people as having "heterosexual privilege." To those folks, I remind them that one's sexuality can be "fluid," and run on a continuum.

Furthermore, people have lived and died without ever having found love in this world. So, love is where one finds it. Thus, no love by anyone of a specific sexual orientation or gender identification or expression should be judged by others!

GLB&T people must remember that all of us are God's children.

We need each other to fight the real enemies: the Religious Right; perverted organized religions and cults; fundamentalists; conservatives; and so many others who hate GLBT people and use the Holy Bible as a means and tool to try and justify their sick hatred of us—collectively.

We must ALL band together to fight the injustice of the aforementioned dark forces of evil. Otherwise, we defeat the very purpose of trying to secure human and civil rights for each other, which is the ultimate injustice!

To this effect, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

So, I rest secure in the knowledge that ALL GLB&T people have a rightful place in the universe and within our society, as "we" are God's children, and God does not make mistakes!

May God keep safe our patriotic and brave servicemembers who fight the "Global War on Terrorism" ; and may God keep safe and bless America and President Barack Obama, who signed the Executive Order to finally put the nail in the coffin of the barbaric and inhumane "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

Lastly, with the shocking defeat of Former First Lady and Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton to President-Elect Donald Trump, in the Presidential Election on November 8, 2016, I fear for the future stability of America as a Democracy, as I know in my heart that there will be a concerted effort by Trump and the Republican Party (Aka Alt-Right) to attack the freedoms of GLBTQ people; people of different colors, races, religions, creeds, ethnicities and the poor. The news of Donald Trump as President-Elect is like a nightmare, from which I cannot awaken.

And, as I write, there is news that Trump and President Putin of Russia –who hacked into U.S. Election computers–which has been confirmed by 17 U.S. Intelligence Agencies and the CIA, now wish to increase nuclear stockpiles. This is simply madness, and the beginning of a new Nuclear Arms Race.

America now about 7,000 nuclear weapons, and according to the Stockholm International Research Institute, nine nations in the world, now possess a total of 16,300 nuclear weapons. Thus, we now have foreign and domestic enemies who wish to divide and try to destroy America.

And, in the process, the lives of all 7.2 billion people on Earth are in jeopardy, as even a “mistake” firing of a single nuclear weapon by any nation, or a cyber attack on a sovereign Nation;s nuclear codes, could well doom all of civilization, as we know it.

This stated, after the Presidential election, I posted the following on Facebook on Sunday, November 20, 2016

“Open letter to the People of America and all my GLBTQ brothers and sisters.” :

As a Bisexual + Community advocate and GLBT and Heterosexual Veterans activist of 27 years, I took an oath in the military to defend our constitution against "foreign and domestic enemies." Thus, as an American, I consider President-Elect Donald Trump and the Right Wing as "Domestic Enemies."

Trump's divisive rhetoric of misogyny, racism, xenophobia, and mockery of the disabled, our Country's veterans, and refusal to distance himself from the endorsement of hate groups, is a testament to his mindset of division and quest for ultimate personal power.

This, combined with the hateful views espoused of allies of the Right Wing who "threaten" to put gays in concentration camps; dismantle the Veterans Administration, and call Social Security an “entitlement,” cannot be erased or ignored, because they have filled the hearts of all the aforementioned with rightful anger and fear. The same type of fear that Hitler used, which brought him to power as Chancellor of Germany.

This stated, I know in my heart that America must have a "peaceful transfer of power," which is the pillar of our Democracy.

However, President-Elect Trump's true character is that of a rich and angry man without a moral compass, who does not grasp the fundamental concept that "all men are created equal."

Blame? There are 325 million people in America. Yet, approximately one-third voted in the election, with over 50% being angry white men. Is this truly the will of the people?

As for those folks who did not vote due to apathy or other reasons, I suggest they all go to Arlington National Cemetery and look upon the graves of those honorable members of the military who laid down their lives for THEIR right to vote. Indeed, to the absent voters, I say: You reap what you sow!

As a person of faith, my core beliefs and values run antithetical to Trumps. Thus, I pray that God will reveal to him the right and moral road to travel for America and humanity when he is in possession of the nuclear codes.

Cliff Arnesen

**"A house divided against itself cannot stand"
–Abraham Lincoln, Republican candidate for
U.S. Senate, 1858**

**"We the people are the rightful masters of both Congress and the courts, not to overthrow the Constitution, but to overthrow the men who pervert the Constitution."
– Abraham Lincoln**

Written with sincere respect and honor, to ALL Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Heterosexual Veterans of the United States Armed Forces; all that comprise the Gay Community; and for my fellow Bisexual brothers and sisters.

As for myself, I have learned in my painful journey through life, that "love is where one finds it."

Carpe Diem,

Cliff Arnesen

"As a bisexual in the military, there is no distinction in terms of punishment, no refuge in being bisexual. You get the same consequences; you don't get half a discharge."

-Cliff Arnesen Quote from Lesbian News, October 2001

Chronological Order of Accomplishments:

JAN. 1988 : Elected President of the New England, Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Veterans, Boston, MA

May 3, 1989 and May 16, 1990 Testimonies Before the US Congress: I became the first and only openly bisexual veteran in U.S. history to testify on behalf of gay, lesbian and bisexual veterans before the U.S. House Committee on Veterans Affairs: Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, on issues relating to AIDS, PTSD, homelessness, gays in the military, and upgrading of less-than-honorable discharges based on homosexuality and bisexuality.

May 1990: I became (1 Of 3) Co-Founders of the National Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Veterans of America (Now named the American Veterans for Equal Rights. (AVER)

PUBLICATION 1991: Author of "Coming Out to Congress" p.233 of "Bi Any Other Name: Bisexual People Speak Out" Loraine Hutchins & Lani Kaahumanu, Editors ISBN 1-55583-1745

Feb. 1991: Boston City Council Testimony: At the request of Boston City Councilor David Scondras, I presented oral testimony before the Boston City Council on the "Family Protection Act," which would give state benefits to gay, lesbian & bisexual "Domestic Partners."

March, 7 1991: I was Interviewed by author Randy Shilts for his book: "Conduct Unbecoming: Gays and Lesbians in the U.S. Military." I was the only Bisexual veteran interviewed, and left out of the book, with exception of name credit for interview. I am very doubtful that the omission was a coincidence.

April, 20, 1991: Authors of "Bi Any Other Name: Bisexual People Speak Out" book signing was held at "Glad Day Book" store in Boston, MA.

August 27, 1991: With the vote and support of the membership of the New England Gay & Lesbian Veterans, I changed the name of our organization to the New England Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Veterans, Inc.

March 15, 1992: Under a state court order issued by Boston, MA Superior Court Judge, Harry Zobel to the Gay, Lesbian, Irish Bisexual organization (GLIB), I, as an openly Bisexual veteran, marched a five mile route under heavy police protection alongside my GLB brothers and sisters, through an anti-gay, hate filled crowd of a half million people in Boston's infamous St. Patrick's Day Parade.

The date was also "Evacuation Day," when the British were driven out of Boston by Gen. George Washington's Continental Army.

CONGRESS: MARCH 5, 1993: I supplied official and permanent written Congressional testimony to Senator Sam Nunn's U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, in an effort to lift the ban on gay, lesbian and bisexual servicemembers in the military.

Sunday, 25 April 1993: I and my partner/girlfriend, Claudia Van Putten, shook hands with President Bill Clinton in Boston's North End. Seconds later, I handed a secret service agent an envelope with a copy of my written congressional testimony to Senator Sam Nunn's Committee, in an effort to persuade President Clinton to lift the ban on Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual people in the military.

MAY 5, 1993: I laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery, along with four gay officers and members of the New England, Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Veterans, Boston, MA- to honor all gay, lesbian, bisexual transgendered and Heterosexual veterans who gave their lives in service to our country.

POLITICAL: Thursday, 19 September 1996:

Gay Marine Corps Veteran, Joe Harper, and I as an openly bisexual "Volunteer" veteran, worked on U.S. Senator John F. Kerry's Senate reelection campaign in Boston, Massachusetts

Feb, 16 1997: I was appointed to a two year term as National Vice President, Legislative Affairs, by the Executive Board of the Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Veterans of America. Now known as the American Veterans for Equal Rights (AVER)

Monday, 5, May 1997: PENTAGON MEETING: As National Vice President, Legislative Affairs for the Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Veterans of America, I, along with four officers of the GLBVA, met at the Pentagon with Mr. Frederick Pang, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Management to discuss our collective dissatisfaction regarding the U.S. Military's inhumane "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue" policy.

Wednesday, MAY 7, 1997: WHITE HOUSE MEETING: As Vice President, Legislative Affairs for the National Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Veterans of America; and President, New England Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Veterans, Boston, MA, along with four Gay

officers of GLBVA, met with the "Gay Liaison" and Special Assistant to President Bill Clinton, Mr. Richard Socarides, to discuss our collective displeasure with the U.S. Military's inhumane "Don't Ask Tell, Don't Pursue" Policy.

2006: I worked as an openly Bisexual Veteran and volunteer on State Senator Jarrett T. Barrios' Campaign for reelection to the Massachusetts State Senate.

PUBLIC SPEAKING:

1989: Keynote Speaker at the National Bisexual Conference at, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

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1993: Keynote speaker at the Boston Ethical Society, Boston, MA.

1993: Speaker, Men of all Colors Together: Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

1998: Speaker, 5th International Bisexual Conference at Harvard University

AWARDS:

June 10, 1991: Awarded the "Highly Successful" Department of Veterans Affairs Performance Award by Smith Jenkins, VA Medical Center Director at Causeway Street Outpatient Clinic, Boston, MA.

October 2004: Awarded the "Medal of Valor" from Mario A. Benfield, Commander, Alexander Hamilton, American Legion Post 448, for human & civil rights advocacy on behalf of our country's GLBT&H Veterans.

September 24, 2012: Awarded the "Unsung Hero Award," from the Boston Bisexual Resource Center, which states: "The Bisexual Resource Center Acknowledges Cliff Arnesen as an Unsung Hero, in recognition of his outstanding activist work

within and for the Bisexual Community, and for helping LGBT Veterans defeat the DADT policy. We salute you."

Sunday, February 23, 2014: The New York Queens Chapter of PFLAG Awarded me The 2013 "Brenda Howard Memorial Award," for 24 years of advocacy on behalf of our Country's Bisexual Community.

***Brenda Howard was an American bisexual rights activist who is known as the "Mother of Pride", and originated the idea for a week-long series of events around Pride Day which became the genesis of the annual LGBT Pride celebrations that are now held around the world every June.**

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brenda_Howard

ORGANIZATIONS & ADVISORY BOARDS:

(1 Of 3) Co-Founders, National Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Veterans of America, Inc. (1990) (Now Know As The American Veterans for Equal Rights (AVER))

Former National Vice President, Legislative Affairs, Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Veterans of America.

Member: Predominately Gay, Alexander Hamilton, American Legion Post 448, San Francisco, CA. (17 Years)

Former Board Member: National Bisexual Advisory Board

Former Medical Patient Services Assistant, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, VA Medical Center, Boston, MA.

Former Member National Blinded Veterans Association Auxiliary

CONGRESSIONAL LETTERS:

UNITED STATES SENATE
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

JOHN KERRY
MASSACHUSETTS

September 14, 1999

Dear Cliff,

Thank you for sharing with me your letter to the President requesting a meeting on the unworkable "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, which I continue to oppose.

I know that we have made progress in extending civil rights since I introduced the Senate's first-ever comprehensive gay civil rights bill in 1985, but much great work remains to be done.

I learned long ago while founding Vietnam Veterans Against the War that Washington is not the front-lines of any struggle for justice: federal legislators will always follow local activists when it comes to the extension of civil rights to all Americans, including gay men and lesbians who serve in the military.

This nation is a richer place for your courage and leadership.
All best wishes,

John F. Kerry

CONGRESS of the UNITED STATES
House of Representatives
Washington, DC

December 13, 1999

Mr. Cliff Arnesen
NEGLBV
PO Box 6599
John F. Kennedy Station
Boston, Massachusetts 02114

Dear Cliff,

Obviously I share your frustration that the President continues to be unwilling to do more to alleviate the outrageous impact of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy. And I have recently voiced that displeasure in the enclosed letter to him which I have released to the press in Arizona. I'll continue to work along with you to try to make changes in this.

BARNEY FRANK

Gore/Lieberman 2000
National Headquarters
601 Mainstream Drive
Nashville, TN 37228

November 4, 2000

Dear Mr. Arnesen:

Thank you so much for writing to me regarding the issue of gays enlisting in our country's armed forces. I appreciate hearing from you concerning this controversial issue.

I believe that the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy should be eliminated and that gays and lesbians should be allowed to serve their country without discrimination. If I am entrusted with the presidency, I will make those changes and propose legislation in Congress to eliminate this form of discrimination. It is unacceptable that patriotic men and women who serve their nation with distinction are not only discharged, but suffer persecution and even violence.

As president, I will continue to fight against hate crimes wherever they occur. We all must stand together against bigotry, violence, prejudice and intolerance. Together, we can and will shape the 21st century into one where we are judged by our knowledge and contributions to society, rather than sexual orientation.

Again, thank you for writing and for your interest in a better future for our nation.

Sincerely,

Al Gore

EDUCATION:

School: Bunker Hill Community College, Boston, MA

Degree: Associate in Science: Human Services/Psychology Minor

State Certificate: Mental Health Worker

High Honors: GPA 3.88

1988 : Harvard University Extension School

END